PHIL 3350 - Medical Humanities

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Office Hours: by appointment

# Required Texts:

All readings will be shared electronically through Elearning.

# Course Description:

Medicine (health care/healing) is crucial to the well-being of humans everywhere. Often, in health care education, we focus extensively or even exclusively on the science that underlies it (chemistry, biology, etc) and ignore the social and cultural ramifications that accompany medicine and the related fields. This course will look at health care as a subject of academic study and will examine the various and important interactions between the subject and a number of disciplines within the humanities. Through the course of the semester, we will seek to locate and analyze the role that medicine plays in social realms of the United States and abroad, we will discuss basic principles of ethical biomedical research and treatment, and we will see how approaches to medicine influence academic study, and vice versa.

This course is an asynchronous online class, meaning, there are no scheduled meetings in person or over zoom. However, I am more than happy to meet to discuss the class or other matters over zoom or in person. My office hours are by appointment only. If you want to ensure a meeting with me during my office hours, feel free to shoot me an email so I can block off the time for you!

# Course Requirements:

Since this is an asynchronous class, the course will follow a discussion board-based structure:

**Every Wednesday by 11:59 pm**, you are to make one brief post around 500 words minimum (or one double-spaced page). You are welcome to go over 500 words if you like, but please don't get carried away as others will have to digest and respond to your post! (In other words, you won’t get extra points for going way over the word minimum). Your original posts

*should not be mere summaries* of the readings. Instead, plan to discuss what you think about the topic, what you think the authors got right or wrong, what sorts of questions you have, initial reactions, and so on.

**Every Sunday by 10 pm**, you are to respond to three original posts made by your peers.

These responses can be shorter than your original posts (300 words) but should be more than a simple “I agree” or “I disagree”. In your responses, you are more than welcome to agree or disagree with

one another- but please always be respectful of one another as some of the topics we will be discussing are sensitive, and I want us to create a welcoming and collaborative environment.

**Grading of your posts-** Each week your collective 4 posts (1 original, 3 responses) will be graded out of 20 points (5 points each post). You will lose points if your posts are late, too short/off-topic/too vague, if they contain excessively poor grammar or spelling, and if you fail to make your full 4 posts. I will be dropping your lowest discussion board grade from your final grade calculation.

# Main Projects:

This course will contain two main projects, a short midterm paper, and a final paper. This class is an Essential Studies class that fulfills level 2- Exploration & Discovery; Science and

Technology. Due to this, certain institutional requirements must be met on this course. These requirements will be primarily reflected in your final paper for the class.

**Mid-Term Paper**: An approximately 2,000-word paper (about six double-spaced pages) that analyzes a movie focusing on medicine and ethics. Detailed instructions, as well as a list of potential movies, can be found in the Midterm module on Elearning.

**Final Term Paper:** 1,200 – 1,500-word critical evaluation of the assigned article. Your paper should not be a summary of the article but instead should engage directly with the data, arguments, and conclusions within the article. As this is the final project for our course, pay

special attention to how the article addresses topics that we have covered in class and focus your response on these topics/themes. You should use no resources besides our assigned readings.

Further instructions can be found in the finals week module on Elearning.

# Grading:

Weekly Posts to Discussion Boards 50% (each discussion set is worth around 8%) Midterm Writing Assignment 25%

Final Writing Assignment 25%

# Academic Honesty:

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the undergraduate catalog that pertain to Academic Integrity. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification, forgery, multiple submissions, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of

academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

# Extensions, Unforeseen Circumstances, and Accommodations:

Extensions will be permitted on a case-by-case basis. If something comes up that will greatly impact your working abilities or ability to turn things in on time, please let me know sooner rather than later so we can work on reaching a solution. ***I will not grant last-minute***

***extensions unless you are facing extreme circumstances*** (e.g. you got hit by a bus, you’ve been severely poisoned by your roommate and are being rushed to the hospital, etc). If you require general accommodations or are set to receive accommodations for the course through the university, please let me know in an email so I can properly note it on my end.

**Schedule and Readings:**

**Week 1 - Aug 30 - Sept 1**

Introduction to the course and subject

**Read**: <https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/pinkguidetophilosophy/> & “Patients are Humans” article

**Due**: Discussion Post #1

**Week 2 - Sept 4 - Sept 10**

Disease and Illness

**Read**: Eric J. Hassel’s “Illness and Disease”

**Due**: Discussion Post #2

**Week 3 - Sept 11 - Sept 17**

Disability

**Read**: Diane Pric Hernd’s “Disease vs Disability” & “The Intersection of Disability Studies and Health Science”

**Due**: Discussion Post #3

**Week 4 - Sept 18 - Sept 24**

Death and Dying

**Read**: Val Plumwood’s “Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death” & Order of the Good Death (home page, and about page).

**Due**: Discussion Post #4

**Week 5 - Sept 25 - Oct 1**

Patient-Professional Relationships

**Read**: “Doctor-Patient Relationship as described by Physicians”

**Due**: Discussion Post #5

**Week 6 - Oct 2 - Oct 8**

The Body

**Read**: “Body Modification Practices and the Medical Monopoly” & “Gender Dysphoria, Body Dysmorphia, and the Problematic of Body Modification”

**Due**: Discussion Post #6

**Week 7 - Oct 9 - Oct 15 Midterm Essay Due October 12 by midnight**

Gender and Sexuality

**Read**: Questioning Bioethics: AIDS, Sexual Ethics, and the Duty to Warn

**Due**: Discussion Post #7

 **Week 8 - Oct 16- Oct 22 Fall Break**

No Readings or Assignments

**Week 9 - Oct 23 - Oct 29**

Race and Class

**Read:** “Introduction: Race, Gender, Class, for what?” & “Why Bioethics has a Race Problem”

**Due:** Discussion Post #8

**Week 10 - Oct 30 - Nov 5**

Aging

**Read: “**Anti-Aging Medicine: Predictions, Moral Obligations, and Biomedical Intervention”

**Due:** Discussion Post #9

**Week 11 - Nov 6 - Nov 12**

Mental Illness

**Read: “**Stigma and the politics of biomedical models of mental illness”

**Due:** Discussion Post #10

**Week 12 - Nov 13 - Nov 19**

Spirituality and Religion

**Read:** NPR, “Spotlight on Clash Between Medicine and Religion” here: <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/31/643407967/michigan-childs-death-puts-spotlight-on-clash-between-medicine-and-religion> & “The Relationship between Medicine, Spirituality and Religion: Three Models for Integration”

**Due:** Discussion Post #11

**Week 13 - Nov 20 - Nov 26 Thanksgiving Break**

No Readings or Assignments

**Week 14 - Nov 27 - Dec 3**

Science and Technology

**Read:** “Future of Medical Care: Technology”

**Due:** Discussion Post #12

**Week 15 - Dec 4 - Dec 10**

Health Professions Education

**Read:** “What is it to do good medical ethics? Minding the gap(s)” & “Interprofessional Education for Students of Translation/Interpreting and the Health Professions”

**Due:** Discussion Post #13

**Finals Week - December 12-15**

No readings or assignments. Focus on writing your final paper.

Final assignment due the 15th by midnight